

SECRET

7 November 1951

To: Chief, FDS  
Via: Chief, FDS/West  
From: [ ]

sent  
MKG-W-11713  
dated 29 Nov  
1951

Subject: Conference with Nikola ABRANCHIK

1. For five hours on 25 October 1951, the undersigned and [ ] conferred with the President of the Byelorussian National Rada (BHR), Nikola ABRANCHIK, who had requested Contacts Branch, [ ], to arrange a meeting with the undersigned. The conference was held half in French and half in Russian. Some of the questions raised by ABRANCHIK are being included in a cable to CSOB. A second meeting with ABRANCHIK in Washington is scheduled to take place in approximately a fortnight.

2. During prior coordination with OPC of the subject matter to be taken up with ABRANCHIK, [ ] stated that ABRANCHIK had received a visitor's visa through the courtesy of QIACTIVE in order that he might persuade Byelorussian National Rada members in the United States and Canada to agree to the BHR's proposed membership in the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia. [ ] told the case officers to avoid any committal statements on Project QIACTIVE. The case officers agreed that the meeting would only revolve around subjects brought up by ABRANCHIK and that the case officers would, if the necessity arose, simply say that they are intelligence officers not professionally interested in politics and that they had no intention of giving ABRANCHIK any political advice since this was not their business. As it turned out, ABRANCHIK did make several statements concerning conversations he had held with [ ] and Mr. Alexander Kerensky. He did not ask any questions concerning U. S. government or the case officers' opinions on Project QIACTIVE and none were given.

3. The meeting began at approximately 11:00 in a hotel room rented by the case officers near the District of Columbia YMCA where ABRANCHIK was rooming. The initial hours of the conference were conducted in French by the undersigned with translation for [ ] because it was rightly felt that if the undersigned tried to talk Russian he would inevitably use Ukrainian by mistake. After the amenities had been exchanged, ABRANCHIK got down to business by posing four operational questions "on the behalf of Major RAGULA." The Washington case officers assume that he raised these questions through Munich but got no satisfaction. In brief the questions he raised were:

a. Whether it would be possible for reasons of security to change the method of disposal of candidates who flunked their CARRIAGE tests so that they would not be returned to their abandoned former habitats in a disgruntled frame of mind, as did [ ]

SECRET

DECLASSIFIED AND RELEASED BY  
CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY  
SOURCES/METHODS EXEMPTION 3B2E  
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT  
DATE 2005

-2-  
SECRET

b. Whether it would be possible to stagger the scheduled assessments of the 50 operational candidates so that:

- 1) they would not all arrive in Munich at the same time
- 2) they would not have to return to Belgium, France, etc. to await summons back to Germany later
- 3) the candidates would be kept together, or at least in Germany, until the results of their assessment tests are known and final decisions have been made on their operational suitability.

c. Whether Major RAGULA could travel to the United States and Canada ostensibly on OMAOTIVE business but actually to recruit the estimated 10-12 Byelorussians on this continent who are suitable for current operations.

d. Whether the case officer could so arrange it that Byelorussian youths drafted into the American army would be either:

- 1) earmarked for special training
- 2) kept on tap for any future Byelorussian national military unit.

4. ABRAMCHIK's elaboration of his first question went something like this. When the EHR recommends a candidate for clandestine current operations, the EHR is assuming full responsibility that the candidate is politically reliable. As sponsors, however, both ABRAMCHIK and Major RAGULA realize that within a group of 50 or more men a few will be psychologically unsuited for dispatch in the current operations program. Nor do they deny that it is possible that a Soviet agent might be unearthed from among a large number of candidates over a period of years. Nevertheless they have not recommended any candidate to date whose main activities in the last six to eight years have not been known to them or other trustworthy Byelorussian nationalists. ABRAMCHIK then reiterated his statement of a year ago that the EHR has more to lose through the unintentional inclusion of a Soviet agent in these operations than the United States. ABRAMCHIK, while understanding the necessity for use of CARRIAGE, feels that the method of conducting the assessment should be improved so that the candidates will not feel that RAGULA or the EHR have become mercenary agents of the Americans. In other words, the CARRIAGE test must not give the candidates the wrong impression concerning the EHR-American relationship. ABRAMCHIK added that an American case officer in Munich told RAGULA that CARRIAGE tests were necessitated by irrevocable instructions emanating from Washington. The undersigned answered that what the case officer in Munich said was correct. ABRAMCHIK went on to say that not the CARRIAGE test itself but the methods of administering it and of handling the candidates both before, during and after the CARRIAGE test were his real worry. Even then, he added, he was not so much concerned with

SECRET

-3- SECRET

the effects of mishandling on those candidates who pass their assessment test as on those candidates who flunk and are subsequently disposed of. Here he believes lies the principal flaw both for the security of the operations and of the BNR. Luckily, [ ] as ABRAMCHIK's [ ] did not get completely out of control after his return to Paris although he ranted and raved at some length against the lousy machine and his handling by the Americans. ABRAMCHIK did not mention any untoward security breaches or flaps for the BNR resulting from [ ] return to Paris but he reiterated that it was not easy to deal with this soured young man and that it would not be possible for the BNR to guarantee the security obedience of future rejectees unless their disposal is handled in such a way that they do not become completely discouraged and sour. ABRAMCHIK suggested that those men who are found unsuitable for current operations for psychological reasons only (i.e. not for security reasons) should be considered as candidates for military instruction or if not suited for that they should be put on some immigration quota so that they will be satisfied and secure in the realization that they have at least gained something by volunteering to risk their lives for the BNR. ABRAMCHIK and RAGULA both feel that a man who has been asked to give up his employment, to live a cover-story to explain his disappearance from his normal environment, drop all contacts with his friends, etc., should not be sent back jobless and feeling insecure to his erstwhile milieu just because he flunks his assessment tests. ABRAMCHIK apparently would expand this proposal even to include candidates, which judged by the CARRIAGE results alone, are deemed security suspects. ABRAMCHIK seems to feel that if a probable Soviet agent cannot be jailed he at least ought to be emigrated to an area where he cannot get into the BNR's hair.

5. In answer to ABRAMCHIK's points the undersigned explained that normally any requests from him or Major RAGULA for provisions in the activities conducted at Munich should be channeled through the case in that city since it is only with the concurrence of overseas case officers that Washington will consent to modifications. The undersigned did, however, offer to forward ABRAMCHIK's views to Munich in order to get the reactions of the AECOR case officers there. The case officers also said that it might be possible to give to suitable Byelorussian DP's, for instance to some of those of Major RAGULA's fifty assessment candidates who are found psychologically unsuited to current operations, military training so that their services could be used in wartime. The case officers mentioned that military training for DP's had reached the discusional stage in Washington, but that no firm planning for specific programs could be expected for at least three to four months. Some of the non-security rejectees could certainly be absorbed in these programs. The mention of military training for Byelorussians worked a noticeable effect on ABRAMCHIK who commented that the BNR would appreciate the opportunity of furnishing candidates and of consulting with American officials on this subject, provided that some assurance could be given that such soldiers would not be put into action except against the Soviet Union and then preferably on Byelorussian soil. The case officers replied that the military training program would involve candidates only for use in a war with the Soviet Union and that in all probability they would fight where they were best suited to fight. ABRAMCHIK was also advised that this whole plan is secret and its existence must not be revealed to anyone else.

SECRET

SECRET

6. According to ABRAMCHIK, CSOB plans to assess the 50 Byelorussian candidates as simultaneously as possible. All 50 will be asked to take a few days leave from their jobs, come to Munich for assessment and then return to their place of work to await further developments. To ABRAMCHIK this plan is fraught with unnecessary hazards for security and morale. From the security point of view, ABRAMCHIK thinks, it is bad to have a plurality of candidates come for assessment at the same time since the rejected candidates should not know who has been accepted and vice versa. ABRAMCHIK implied that the 50 candidates do not now know of each others plans and intentions. In addition, returning the candidates to their jobs after assessment will damage their morale. If they are summoned practically simultaneously for assessments in Germany, ABRAMCHIK foresees security complications stemming from the practically concurrent travel of so many young men from their rather small emigration. ABRAMCHIK's first suggestion, that the candidates be kept together in Germany after their assessment was rejected by the Washington case officers on the same security grounds that ABRAMCHIK mentioned in connection with simultaneous assessment. This subject was dropped without reaching any particular conclusions except that Washington would forward to Munich ABRAMCHIK's views in the hope that a system satisfactory to both parties can be worked out to minimize security, morale and prestige mishaps resulting from assessment methods.

7. On his trip a year ago, ABRAMCHIK interviewed several young Byelorussians who volunteered to go back to Byelorussia on any type of mission for the EHR and at any time. Some of these persons interviewed lived in the United States, others in Canada. ABRAMCHIK requested the reaction of the case officers to a proposal that Major RAGULA make a recruitment and spotting expedition to the United States and Canada. [ ] asked why recruitment and spotting could not be accomplished by the EHR's military representative in New York, General KUSHAL. ABRAMCHIK replied that General KUSHAL's talents lie in the military and not in the operational field and that for security reasons he did not want to bring KUSHAL into the operations if this could be avoided. He also felt that a young man should do the recruitment since KUSHAL is quite old. [ ] alluded to the likelihood that KUSHAL will in the long run find out what is going on operationally anyway and feel slighted. ABRAMCHIK said that KUSHAL would realize that he had not been slighted and that his own proper role is that of battalion or division commander and not that of case officer for secret operations. [ ] stated that an overt trip by Major RAGULA to the United States at the present time would inevitably produce unfavorable security repercussions. ABRAMCHIK agreed that unless Major RAGULA had a reasonably foolproof coverstory for his trip his appearance in America in Byelorussian circles would be bad for the security of the operation. He added, however, that since Major RAGULA is the EHR's interim delegate to the Committee for the Liberation of the Peoples of Russia, his recruitment and spotting work could be integrated with a trip to the United States on official Committee business. Both case officers implied that the EHR's plans in the realm of politics are its own business. If Major RAGULA spends a good deal of time doing political work within OXACTIVE his operational usefulness would be greatly curtailed. Neither the Washington

SECRET

or Munich case officers see any justification for relinquishing their primary claim on RAGULA's services. ABRAMCHIK assured the case officers that Major RAGULA is only the interim delegate to QKACTIVE and that he will continue to spend almost all of his time on operational matters. Until now RAGULA has used his position as President of the Byelorussian Students Association in Brussels as cover for his travels, although, according to ABRAMCHIK, this cover is wearing slightly thin, particularly at the German consulate in Belgium where his visa requests have been many. RAGULA's QKACTIVE connection will afford him a new coverstory for his travels, ABRAMCHIK thinks. While not trying to discourage RAGULA's participation so long as politicking does not interfere with operations, both the undersigned and [ ] voiced the opinion that until the 50 candidates abroad have been digested or training facilities have been set up outside of Europe, it would be inexpedient for RAGULA to recruit the dozen or so young men in North America. ABRAMCHIK agreed with the case officers.

8. During the commentary on military training, ABRAMCHIK mentioned that several Byelorussian youths in the United States have been drafted into the American army. Many of these lads, he averred, would like nothing better than to participate in an American-sponsored Byelorussian military unit inside or outside the American army. In answer to his question as to what could be done with these men now, the case officers told ABRAMCHIK that if he could produce the military addresses of these men it might be possible to earmark them for future reassignment or at least to see that they have the opportunity of volunteering for special U. S. Army training which would increase their usefulness for whatever Byelorussian military units are formed in the future. ABRAMCHIK said he would supply addresses before leaving again for Europe. He was instructed to turn over these addresses, which he will get through General KUSHAL in New York, to [ ] of the Contacts Division [ ]. The undersigned asked ABRAMCHIK to tell [ ] that these addresses should be forwarded to [ ] the pseudonym used by the undersigned for registering at the hotel. Arrangements have been made with [ ] so that any information ABRAMCHIK wishes to pass to the undersigned will be channeled through the Contacts Division.

9. While expounding the necessity for CARRIAGE tests, the undersigned argued that since Nikola PANKOV accused another member of the BNR, IAN KALTUMOVSKI, of being a Soviet agent and that if BNR members accuse each other of being Soviet agents, the American service cannot be blamed for using the lie detector. The case officer mentioned also in passing that both PANKOV and KALTUMOVSKI are reportedly members of the AEN. In reply ABRAMCHIK discussed the relationship of the BNR to the AEN, saying that officially the BNR does not belong to that organization although from time to time BNR members attend the meetings of AEN as observers. This introduced a spontaneous dissertation by ABRAMCHIK of the emigre relationships between the BNR and the Ukrainians. He began by stating that the BNR does not want to be associated in anybody's mind with the OUN/Bandera which he believes is giving the entire non-Russian emigration a black eye. The Galicians, ABRAMCHIK believes, were greatly persuaded by the romantic side

SECRET

-6- SECRET

of Polish nationalism but were unable to acquire any of the Poles diplomatic finesse. For this reason the Galicians act rashly, thinking with their hearts rather than with their heads, whereas the non-Galician Ukrainians, ABRAMCHIK hastened to add, are not given to such rash acts as the OUN/Bandera. Judging from ABRAMCHIK's facial expressions and tone of voice during this unsolicited statement, it can probably be said that he is quite aware of the unfavorable American evaluation of the OUN/Bandera and the AEM and therefore, in a word, he was trying to say "don't worry, the EER does not associate with those fellows."

10. ABRAMCHIK volunteered that the purpose of his trip to Washington was two-fold: he intended in addition to discussing Project AEQUOR with the undersigned to talk with the Washington VOA people in the Department of State. On 24 October he talked with a Mr. Kularek in Assistant Secretary Barrett's office. ABRAMCHIK told Mr. Kularek that it was the desire of all Byelorussian emigres that a program in their language be broadcast to the USSR. ABRAMCHIK has long been aware that the State Department is opposed to starting any Byelorussian broadcast. Several Byelorussians who have discussed the matter with Mr. Foy Kohler have usually received the following pat answer: all Byelorussians understand either Russian or Polish and since there are broadcasts in both of those languages we see no necessity for a special Byelorussian program. In addition, Kohler usually adds, the VOA does not have sufficient money to finance such broadcasts. All Byelorussians feel that Mr. Kohler is very intractable to deal with. It is ABRAMCHIK's own opinion that Kohler's answers are completely purposely misleading, inappropriate and specious for the State Department cannot be so disoriented that it fails to recognize the political significance of the non-Russian languages in the Soviet Union nor could the expenses of a Byelorussian staff of ten people exhaust the vast appropriation that the VOA has received. According to ABRAMCHIK about 3 million of the 16 million Byelorussians in the Soviet Union can be said to understand Russian perfectly. The official language of the Byelorussian Republic is not Russian but Byelorussian and the majority of publications for local consumption there, such as newspapers, Stalin biographies, etc., are in Byelorussian and not in Russian. Even Czar Nicholas II was forced to recognize and condone the existence of a Byelorussian language. Since language is not only a means of communication but a major political brickbat in the USSR, the lack of a Byelorussian program on the VOA cannot but help the Soviet regime in their efforts to convince disaffected Byelorussians that the West agrees with the Soviet Union in considering the Byelorussians as hardly distinguishable from Russians. ABRAMCHIK noted that there are broadcasts in the languages of all the minute Baltic states (whose total populations do not amount to one-fourth that of Byelorussia), in the Polish language, in Ukrainian, and in Russian, that is to say in all the languages of contiguous peoples, but the VOA has summarily disregarded the existence of 16 million Byelorussians. This is an error which the United States will regret, he added, for it gives Stalin another unearned and unopposed advantage in the cold war struggle for men's minds. Mr. Kularek was allegedly sympathetic with ABRAMCHIK, but added that at the present time

SECRET

SECRET

nothing could be done to change the minds of his superiors who were dead set against any Byelorussian broadcasts. The case officers cautioned ABRAMCHIK not to alienate the State Department by too much insistence on Byelorussian broadcasts now, at a time when the State Department has so many headaches resulting from the poor quality of their Slavic language programs that they would be obviously unwilling to take on another set of problems until they have been able to improve the programs already underway. [ ] also commented that with Alexander Barmine, a died-in-the-wool Great Russian, as the head of the Slavic language section, the Byelorussian VOA programs would be un-Byelorussian in content and that therefore so long as Barmine retains his position it would probably be wiser to have no Byelorussian broadcasts at all rather than thinly-disguised Great Russian propaganda in Byelorussia. [ ] inferred that the present VOA organization chiefs would not remain in their positions indefinitely, particularly in view of the deluge of protests that the Ukrainians and other non-Russian nationalities have showered upon the VOA. ABRAMCHIK said that his discussions with the State Department would continue to be diplomatic and would stress matters of principle rather than demands for immediate action. The case officers stated that they could see no harm in keeping the problem alive in the minds of State Department officials.

11. During lunch in the hotel room which followed the VOA discussion, ABRAMCHIK relaxed, apparently having sensed from the case officers' comments on the VOA that he was among friends. He then recounted his discussions with Kerenaky and other QKACTIVE personalities. Two features of QKACTIVE have distressed him in particular. First of all, he resented as unfair the implied threats used by both Kerenaky and other QKACTIVE personalities that if the BNR would not join the Committee, the Committee would find other "Byelorussian representatives" who could be lured into the Committee by the funds which the Committee proposes to disburse. The second and more serious objection ABRAMCHIK raised when talking with Kerenaky and others concerns the camouflaged domination of the Russians within the Committee. ABRAMCHIK finds an obvious paradox between the professedly democratic precepts of the Committee and the actual voting mathematics which the Committee has decided to adopt. With twenty Great Russian representatives, twenty non-Russian representatives and twenty "neutrals" (ABRAMCHIK is convinced these will be Russians), the Russians will be in a voting majority and the non-Russian representatives will by no stretch of the imagination have an equal say in the affairs of the Committee. ABRAMCHIK asserts that if the American Committee and the five Russian parties really seek to handle their business in a democratic manner, there should be parity of representation as in the United Nations where the number of delegates does not depend on the size of any particular nation nor on its power but on the right of every nation, large and small, to have an equal voting voice. ABRAMCHIK would not say that these two negative factors will keep the BNR from joining QKACTIVE, but he does feel that the significance of all decisions taken by the Committee will be severely curtailed and conditioned by the very fact that the Committee is not organized in a democratic manner. He thus predicts the inability of the Committee to make decisions which will be acceptable to non-Russians in the emigration and in the USSR. ABRAMCHIK added that as far as he knows the

SECRET

SECRET

-3-

Ukrainians have no intention of joining QIACTIVE and that some Ukrainians have even gone on to say that the only way Ukrainians will negotiate with Kerensky and his friends is with sabres. ABRAMCHIK implied that he had made no decision as to whether the BNR would actually join QIACTIVE. He is however going to talk with members of the BNR in New York and Toronto. He added that the average emigre explains the opulence of QIACTIVE in one of two ways: the money comes from reactionary Russophile capitalists on Wall Street or from the State Department.

12. Before ABRAMCHIK returns to Washington for the next meeting, we hope to have received a pouch or two on the latest Munich ABQUOR developments and a cable in answer to our request for CSOB's reactions to ABRAMCHIK's requests. Some of the additional subjects that will be discussed with ABRAMCHIK are:

a. the fact that he is welcome to channel any political or operational suggestions to Washington through BAGULA and the case officer in Munich.

b. the actual names of the Soviet Union books and periodicals published in Byelorussian.

c. Washington's wish to have a brief study report on Byelorussian nationalism written by ABRAMCHIK or a member of his group with particular stress on the last decade.

d. Washington's wish to have a fairly detailed description of the Byelorussian emigration and its activities. (ABRAMCHIK estimates that there are some 50,000 Byelorussians outside the Iron Curtain, of which only about 10,000 are politically active nationalists.)

e. We would appreciate the names of any German officers or officials of the Third Reich who had firsthand knowledge of Byelorussian nationalism in the last war.

f. We would appreciate any names and addresses of recent escapees from Byelorussia or eastern Poland.

g. We are quite interested in any except trivial or uninvestigatable information on persons suspected of being Soviet agents.

h. We are also interested in receiving from the BNR every month a digest of all significant items of positive or counterintelligence on persons or events in Byelorussia whether these items appear in censored letters, newspapers or what.

i. We are anxious to know the names and addresses of persons who are sufficiently familiar from postwar experience with this or that major city, industry or factory in Byelorussia that they could answer a rather detailed questionnaire.

SECRET



SECRET

j. He would like the EBR to collect for us secondhand pocket items and clothing of Soviet manufacture, particularly expendable items such as underwear, socks, handkerchiefs and shoes if we foot the bill; we would demand that the year and locality of purchase be given with each item.

k. We would appreciate any photographs of typicallly-dressed workers or peasants etc. for particular areas of Byelorussia along with a legend explaining what each photograph represents.

l. We would like ABRAMCHIK's, BACULA's or any other member of the EBR's estimate of Soviet plans and intentions including the evidence which leads the author to his conclusions.

m. We should like the EBR's impressions of the Lithuanian, Ukrainian, Polish and Russian emigrations.

[ ]

SECRET